

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

THE REEVE EDGE INN

Deep in the heart of the rugged Pennine Range, nestled amidst the heather and bracken, stood the remnants of the Reeve Edge Inn. Once a bustling wayside refuge for weary travelers, it now lay in ruins, its glory days long gone. The inn's timeworn stones were overtaken by a lush green blanket of nature, a silent testament to its forgotten past.

Seventy years had passed since the inn's demise on a wild and stormy night, succumbing to decay and abandonment. The construction of better roads in the Todmorden valley diverted the course of commerce, rendering the once-thriving inn obsolete. Though time had left its mark, some of the weathered stones found new purpose in the fences encircling the nearby pasture. The inn's final tenant, William Lee, hailed from a long line of ancestors rooted in the region. His family's legacy intermingled with the stories of the land. A weathered oak kist at Jerusalem Farm bore his initials, a relic from William's time as the inn's last landlord.

The inn took its name from the "Reeve Edge," a rocky hill crowned with massive blocks of millstone grit that stretched from north to south, pointing toward Swindean waterhead. In bygone years, the cottages of Briercliffe, Extwistle, and Trawden bustled with the creation of huckabacks, bockins, and bombazines—sturdy fabrics crafted by local weavers. These goods, loaded onto packhorses, traversed the treacherous moors, bound for the bustling emporium of Halifax.

The perilous journey across Widdup Head, plagued by footpads and robbers, prompted weavers to gather at the Reeve Edge Inn. Their mutual protection became essential as they awaited a sufficient number to join forces and brave the treacherous paths together. Many a wrongdoer met their downfall under the shadow of York's ancient fortress, their crimes fading from memory over time, particularly for those living on the Yorkshire side of the Pennine Range. Amongst these forgotten tales, one incident stands out, witnessed by a passive observer from the local community. In a secluded valley enveloped by desolate moors, "The Greave" farmhouse stood as a solitary abode. Old Binn o' Withams, a skilled joiner and hand-loom maker from Lane Bottom, had been enlisted to undertake repairs on the farm buildings.

One fateful day, as the noon hour approached, Binn sat at the table alongside the farmer and his family, enjoying a simple meal. Suddenly, a gang of robbers, their faces concealed by soot, burst into the house. Engaging in a hasty plunder, they ransacked drawers and boxes, seizing whatever money they could find. Satisfied with their spoils, they prepared to depart when the farmer uttered a rash statement: "I know you, and you'll suffer for this."

Those words proved fatal. The robbers swiftly turned back, snatching the farmer's gun from the wall. Without hesitation, they loaded it before his horrified gaze and extinguished his life, leaving a tragic scene in their wake. Old Binn, frozen in his seat, bore witness to this gruesome act, his heart heavy with the weight of the unspeakable tragedy.

Despite the passage of time, the identities of the murderers remained a mystery. Rumors swirled that the same gang had been apprehended for another crime, and one of them purportedly confessed to being part of the fatal encounter at The Greave. The man met his demise in exile in Botany Bay, his name—Britcliffe—a direct descendant of the illustrious Briercliffes of Briercliffe,

By Donald Jay